

NEW ENGLAND PASTOR

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JESUS, OUR INTERCESSOR

A NEW LOOK AT CHRIST'S WORK OF INTERCESSION

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EDITOR
Shawn Brace

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Bill Brace

PROOFREADING EDITOR
Wanda Hopkins

LAYOUT DESIGN/PRINTER
L. Brown and Sons Printing, Inc.
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(802) 272-8029
newenglandpastormagazine.blogspot.com
newenglandpastor@gmail.com

ADDRESS:
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Thoughts On Last-Day Christ Issues

by Bill Brace

May I begin this column with a question? With or without permission, here it is: Have you ever given much attention to the statement of Jesus in Matthew 24: 24, "For false christs . . . will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect"?¹

Of course, we utilize this text frequently in our evangelistic meetings as we share with our non-SDA audiences the signs of the last days. And rightly so. As part of our convincing caution to the warning of Jesus, we buttress our emphasis via the truly tragic stories which surround the modern and infamous names of Jim Jones and David Koresh. Such analysis and application of the text does well to remind our audiences of the need to be on the alert so as not to be deceived.

And then we also have our frequent times of internal speculation over the "if possible, the very elect" segment of the passage during our Sabbath afternoon dialogues around the dinner table or at our midweek services on Wednesday nights. However, on occasion, these latter conversations, it appears to me, seem almost to be tainted with a certain degree of superficiality.

Lately, I have given the Lord's counsel of two millennia ago added attention, especially in conjunction with the warning of Ellen White in her vision recorded in *Early Writings*, pp. 54-56. (I would encourage you to look at it once again. It is only a five-minute read.) That vision is a very sober one, and not to be singularly applied simply to some historical occasion during the budding days of our denomination, as some do.

Let me review briefly the content and motif of the vision. The servant of the Lord saw two companies: one followed

Jesus into the Most Holy Place and prayed there to God the Father for the Holy Spirit. Then Jesus would breathe the Spirit upon them, and "in that breath was light, power, and much love, joy and peace."² These individuals, quite evidently to us, are designated in Scripture as ones "who follow the Lamb wherever He goes" (Revelation 14: 4).

A second group did not enter into the Most Holy Place but chose to remain in the outer apartment, the Holy Place. They also prayed to God the Father for the Holy Spirit, but they did not know that Jesus was no longer there. Satan, instead, would breathe upon this latter company and send them an unholy influence that

In what may sound far-fetched and even heretical to some, I now ask another question: Is it possible there could be more than one Christ circulating within Seventh-day Adventism today, just before the final crisis which is to break upon us?

contained "light and much power, but no sweet love [agape? mine], joy and peace."³ She then concludes, "Satan's object was to keep them deceived and to draw back and deceive God's children."⁴

In what may sound far-fetched and even heretical to some, I now ask another question: Is it possible there could be more than one Christ circulating within Seventh-

day Adventism today, just before the final crisis which is to break upon us?

Obviously, the Christ who is to be preached, taught and followed is the Christ of the Most Holy Place, especially in these perilous times. That Christ, the Christ of the Most Holy Place, is the One whose intention and objective it is to cleanse us of all unrighteousness and thus bring the Great Controversy to a conclusion.

Any other christ who is preached is one of the Holy Place, and *not* the Most Holy Place.

Do we, as pastors, know the difference? If not, would it not be fair of us to seek and to discover which one we are preaching? Such self-examination might do well in our pursuit to hasten the return of the true Jesus: the One who alone can prepare a people for the glorious wedding day and translation from this world to heaven above.

1 All Bible quotes from the New King James Version.

2 Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1945), 55.

3 Ibid., 56.

4 Ibid.

Bill Brace has been involved in urban ministry for over twenty-five years. He pastors Seventh-day Adventist congregations in Braintree and Norwood, Massachusetts. In addition, he maintains an active radio ministry. His program "Portraits of God" is currently heard on several stations around the United States. He and his wife, Melanie, live in Norfolk, Massachusetts, and they have three grown children, one son-in-law, a daughter-in-law, and five beautiful grandchildren.

Jesus, Our Intercessor—Part 1

by Cliff Gleason



God brought the Seventh-day Adventist Church into existence to carry the everlast-

ing gospel to the world. Some believe that gospel is just the same as was taught in the Reformation. But had the reformers discovered all truth concerning the gospel? As we proclaim the gospel message to the world, we tell of the life, death, and resurrection of our Savior, as we should. But is that the whole story? The Apostle Paul tells us that the work of Jesus on our behalf did not stop at the resurrection. “It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us” (Romans 8:34, KJV).

Jesus ascended to the throne room of heaven to complete a part of His work of saving us. Paul explains that He is the only intercessor or mediator that we have with God (1 Timothy 2:5). Now, believe me, I need a mediator between myself and a holy God. That’s because I have messed up *a lot*. My life record is far from spotless. I know you’ve got the same problem (Romans 3:23). But how can I understand this current ministry of Jesus on my behalf? His death on the cross has already cared for my sins. They are forgiven, forgotten, covered by the blood, thrown into the depths of the sea. Then what does Jesus do as my mediator? I need to know what my Lord is doing and why He is doing it.

Jesus declared plainly, “This is eternal life, to know You, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom You sent” (John 17:3, GW). He also said that in the end of the world He will say to some people who were doing good things, “I never knew you; depart from Me” (Matthew 7:23).¹ It seems to me that everything I can know about Jesus is meant to affect my relationship with Him, meant to help me love and trust Him more. This includes what He is doing as my intercessor. My heart longs to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and

Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). Can I get a mental picture of the ministry He is performing in heaven now? Will understanding it help knit my heart to His more closely?

In the first letter of John we read “if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (2:1). This verse can easily conjure up images of Heaven as a courtroom—with a judge, prosecutor, defense attorney, and the accused. Jesus would be our defense attorney before the judgment seat of the Father. Adventist artists have sought to portray this work of Jesus. They have painted our Lord standing alongside a sinner pleading with the Father to be merciful.

The intercession of Christ is directed toward us, not toward the Father, because we are the ones who need to be reconciled.

We are the ones who are reluctant to come together with God. We are the ones who need to be appealed to.

Imagining such a courtroom scene is so very typical and yet so very wrong. Scripture actually points us in a dramatically different direction that can bring new hope to people’s hearts.

Jesus told us, “The Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son” (John 5:22). Paul said Jesus is at the right hand of the Father (Romans 8:34), a position from which to do judging, not the traditional concept of interceding. Further, Jesus said that when we ask Him to intercede with the Father for us, He would *not* do it. Why? Because the Father already loves us (see John 16:26, 27). This harmonizes with Jesus’ statement that when we see Him we have seen the Father (John

14:8, 9). This is crucial! The Father is just as accepting, understanding, compassionate, and forgiving as is Jesus. We do not need a mediator to ask our merciful Father to be merciful.

Our picture of the throne room of heaven should be a picture of Jesus sharing the throne with the Father. That throne is not a seat for one, but for two. (By the way, in America we call a piece of furniture that is made to seat two persons a “loveseat.” Could we call the throne of God the “loveseat of heaven?”). We see *both* Persons on the throne with an attitude of love and a desire to save. Both shall “be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:26).

So what does it mean, then, that Jesus is an intercessor and mediator? How does He serve between God and sinners? An intercessor or mediator is someone who functions between two parties who are no longer in harmony and removes the things that block their reconciliation. If one of the parties yearns for reconciliation and the other is reluctant, then the mediator must direct his efforts toward the reluctant person. In the case of God and man, it is man who is reluctant, not Jesus and not the Father. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19). The Father Himself loves us. When we have seen Jesus, we have seen the Father. They work together. We have an advocate *with* the Father, not appealing to the Father. The Father is our advocate and Jesus is our advocate. They both desire our healing and restoration. Together they seek to win our trust.

We are so much like our first parents, who, after they fell into sin, hid from God in shame and fear. We tend to avoid God, and are afraid to come to His throne when we fall and fail. But Hebrews 4:14-16 teaches that we can come boldly. John tells us, “Dear friends, if we feel at ease in the presence of God, we will have the courage to come near him” (1 John 3:21 CEV). Paul reminds us that seated on that throne is Jesus, our high priest, our mediator. He will be understanding and compassionate

toward us because He became one of us and lived through the same temptations. He has experienced how hard it is to face the power of sin in our fallen world. He died the death we deserve. His presence on the throne of heaven reminds us that when we see Him we have seen the Father and therefore we need not fear that the other occupant of the throne will be any less understanding, compassionate, and completely committed to our salvation. Truly it is a throne of grace. We can come at any time just as we are and both Son and Father will always be gracious toward us. No wonder we can come with confidence!

The intercession of Christ is directed toward us, not toward the Father, because we are the ones who need to be reconciled. We are the ones who are reluctant to come together with God. We are the ones who need to be appealed to. The apostle Paul emphasizes this point when he writes, “We implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Choose to fix into your mind the Biblical picture of Jesus in His ministry of intercession. Delete the image that He stands with the ashamed sinner before the judgment throne of heaven and appeals to the Father to be merciful. Invite the Holy Spirit to enlarge and enhance the picture of a once-reluctant sinner, now coming with humble confidence to the throne of heaven because he sees Jesus sitting there with arms open in loving invitation, His nail-scarred hands telling of the great sacrifice made for him. By faith he also sees the Father there, with arms open and extending grace, with eyes warm with affection. There is no longer any cause for fear or hesitation in coming with his faults and weakness. You see, the throne of the universe is the loveseat of heaven; it is a throne of *grace* where we receive forgiveness of sin and new life from God that we may live victoriously by the indwelling Christ for His glory. The sinner comes close and kneels at the throne and feels the loving arms of the Son and the Father envelope him for a “family squeeze.” And, look closely—the broad sleeve of Christ’s pure white garment drapes over the believer and he is covered with the robe of Christ’s righteousness. This full reconciliation is the desire of the

Son and the Father. When we come boldly, just as we are, to the Father for mercy and grace, the intercession of Jesus is a success.

What do you expect the Father does with His children who come so confidently to His throne to get their family squeeze? Why, lift them right up onto the throne with Him, that’s what. “To him who overcomes will I grant to sit with Me on My throne even as I overcame and have set down on My Father’s throne” Rev. 3:21. The loveseat of heaven will stretch out to become a very long throne indeed.

How often can we come so boldly to the throne? As often as we need “grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16). That is all the time. We are so weak and fall into sin so often. But knowing that we will always be received with such compassion, understanding, and forgiveness from both Jesus and the Father, we need not hesitate to try to clean ourselves up first, but go immediately to the throne.

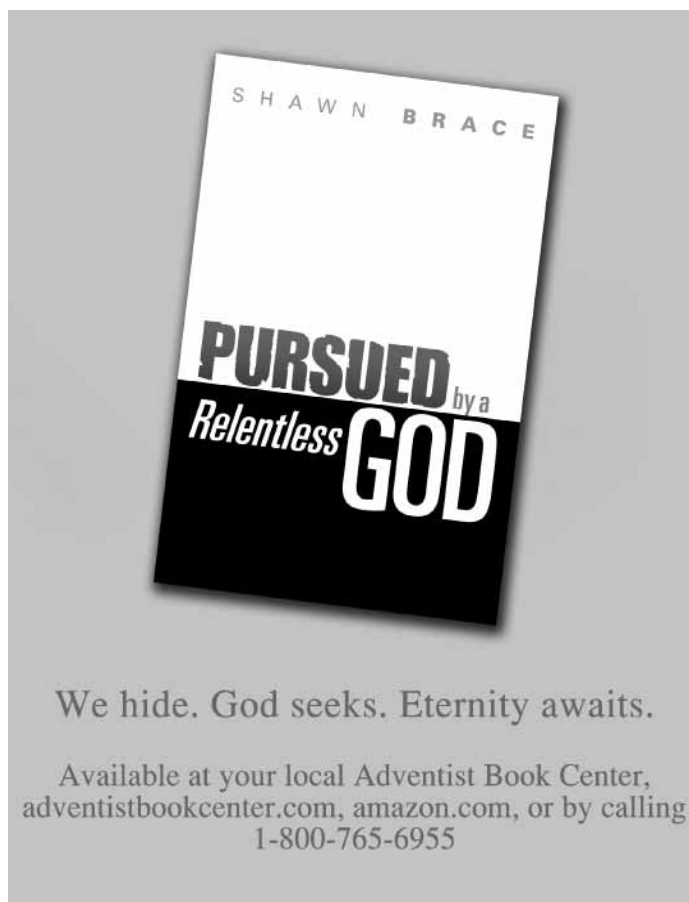
One measure of how mature we are in faith is how quickly we get to the throne after we have fallen. Also, we learn that we can respond to the Spirit’s warning that a temptation is coming our way and head straight to the throne where we have a High Priest who knows what it is like to be tempted. There we can obtain the living connection with God that provides victory.

When we form the habit of continually running confidently to the throne for mercy and transforming grace, we know Father and Son more intimately, enjoy their acceptance, understanding, and compassion more fully. The throne becomes the place where we are the most accepted, comforted, encour-

aged, and loved—it becomes our home. We would rather be there than anywhere else. Sin, rebelliousness, has lost its hold on us because we know and admire Father and Son. The intercession of Christ has done a complete work in us. We no longer need Him to reconcile us to the Father and we can now live “at home” in the presence of a Holy God without an intercessor. We are prepared for Jesus to physically take us home at His coming.

1 Unless noted, all Scripture references are from the *New King James Version*.

Cliff Gleason received a BA in Theology in 1975 from Atlantic Union College. He attended the Seminary at Andrews University and received his MDiv in 1977. He has served as pastor in Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Virginia, Oregon, and currently in New Hampshire. Cliff is captivated by the subjects of the robe of Christ’s righteousness, a revival of true godliness, and the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. His wife, Sue, is an operating room nurse and they have two grown children.



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The Humanity of Jesus in Light of Romans 7—Part 1

by Fred Bischoff



Let us with reverence trace the human experience of Jesus Christ through Paul's description in Romans 7 of the

Christian walk and victory (especially his own).¹ May our hearts be so sensitive that "the Spirit of the truth" can effectively testify to us of Jesus through these reflections, to guide us "into all the truth" (John 15:26; 16:13).

Marriage, Adultery, and Fruit (1-6)

7:1 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?

Being divine, Jesus was the Law-giver having dominion over the law (in contrast to Paul's "altogether human"² birth). Being human, Jesus was "made under the law" (Gal 4:4). But from His pre-incarnate choice He was born with a will surrendered to the will of His Father.³ Therefore, in His humanity He was dead to His own will, and not living in the sense Paul speaks of here. He was alive only to "Thy will, O God." This deadness was a choice that was repeated all of His human life,⁴ because of the susceptibility of His human nature to temptation and sin.⁵

2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband.

Jesus' flesh (the "husband" here⁶, our nature that He took) was alive in the sense of being vulnerable to temptation (not true for God⁷), but dead due to His ongoing choice.⁸ In fact, the viability of His human flesh is what necessitated the daily dying. Paul's experience paralleled this dual condition after his conversion. "Nevertheless I live; yet not I" (Gal 2:20). In Jesus'

daily condemnation of sin in that flesh,⁹ He lived "loosed from the law of husband," loosed from any bondage that yielding to temptation brings. His solution to sin—to be "dead",¹⁰ death extending from His daily cross through the Calvary cross—is the only one there is. Such dying was the manifestation of God's righteousness (faith working by love) in contact with sin, and loosed Him from the law of sin and death in the flesh.¹¹

3 So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

All were included in His victory, and when anyone identifies with Him as He did with all of us, then that victorious, spiritual power will "bring forth fruit unto God."

Being born of the Spirit¹² Jesus started out differently than we do. But similarly, had He on His mission to do His Father's will ever allowed His will or His flesh to rule (His "husband liveth"), He would have committed spiritual adultery, and failed in His mission. The cross Jesus bore from His birth, that actually led Him through Calvary, was this denial of self. It meant His "husband [was] dead" and He was "married to another"—oneness as shown in God's plan for marriage, "one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee" (John 17:21).

4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

Jesus was dead to the law by tak-

ing our flesh, uniting it at His very conception to the Holy Spirit, and successfully, continually condemning the sin in it,¹³ all the way through Calvary. It is only by this amazing feat of the incarnate Jesus ("the body of Christ") that any human being can "become dead to the law." That "power of an endless life" (Heb 7:16) which obtained the victory over sin all His human life also obtained the victory over death when He was "raised from the dead."¹⁴ All were included in His victory, and when anyone *identifies with Him as He did with all of us*, then that victorious, spiritual power will "bring forth fruit unto God."

5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

Though "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," (John 1:14) He was not born "of the will of the flesh" (John 1:13) and so was not simply "flesh," nor simply "in the flesh." Having been "born of the Spirit"—the Holy Spirit—at His one and only birth as a human, He was "spirit" (John 3:6). It was thus in His humanity He could be called "that holy thing."¹⁵ The Spirit that is holy quickened Him all His human life, and His "flesh [profited] nothing" in victory (only in identification with us).¹⁶

This union of spirit and flesh caused in Him "the motions (*pathema*) of sin," usually translated "suffering."¹⁷ His sufferings of temptation did not kill. He so successfully dealt with temptations, that He only brought "forth fruit unto God." The sufferings with their "fruit unto death" speak of the cross, which alone reveals fully the fruit of sin. This was His ultimate identity with sin and death, not any sin that was His and the resultant death, but our sin and death.

6 But now we are delivered from the

law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

The deliverance Paul spoke of here flows out of Jesus' deliverance from sin (which the law defines¹⁸)—living for Himself, saving Himself. This deliverance was seen in His flesh “being dead wherein [He was] held,” and His continually serving “in newness of spirit.” Only thus could He be delivered to suffer and to die our death, the wages of the very sin He overcame, and in such a victory be raised Victor over death also. These are the dimensions of the suffering “with strong crying and tears” He endured while here “in the days of his flesh” (Heb 5:7-10).

The Law, Sin, Death, and the *Ego* (7-14)

7 What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

In Jesus' incarnate state, with His divine powers laid down, He “increased in wisdom,” (Luke 2:52) and would “not [have] known sin, but by the law.” But while the temptation was there, the sin Jesus learned of was not in Him as an expression.¹⁹ As Jesus' cognitive faculties developed, He learned the transcript of what He was from His pre-incarnate state, and what He had been from conception.

Luke recorded Jesus in nearing the pinnacle of His self-sacrifice, using the same verb and noun Paul used here.²⁰ Jesus by the law knew the sin of *taking from others*, and rejected it. He also captured and lived the positive imperative inherent in the law of intensely desiring to *give to others*. The question remains, in Jesus' being “tempted like as we are,” (Heb 4:15) was He tempted not just to take from others, but as addressed in this innermost of all the commandments, was He even tempted to *desire* such?

8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was

dead.

In contrast to Paul and all humans, because of Jesus' victory over any desire to live for self, at no point was this verse true for Him. We must say of Jesus the direct opposite of Paul's confession—that “*righteousness*, taking occasion by *the spirit of* the commandment, wrought in *Him* all manner of *holy, other-centered desires*.”²¹ As the embodiment of the New Covenant with the law's positive side, through the union of divinity with humanity by the Spirit, He manifested how “*with* the law sin was dead.” Jesus came in our flesh “to take away our sins; and in him is no sin” (1 John 3:5); “to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”²² The daily “sacrifice of *himself*” is the “no sin.”

9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

In His pre-incarnate state, and in sinful flesh, Jesus was never “alive without the law.” Self²³ was always dead, and He was always “alive unto God” (Rom 6:11). Only in a somewhat parallel fashion could we say that from Gethsemane to the cross, when He identified with our sin in the deepest way possible, “when the commandment came [“the hour is come”²⁴], sin revived [our sin which He had successfully overcome, now engulfed Him], and I died.”

10 And the commandment, which was *ordained* to life, I found *to be* unto death.

The commandment which He the Lawgiver had given “to life,”²⁵ He Himself “found to be unto death”—our death.²⁶

11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew *me*.

Sin never deceived Jesus. We can only say, “for sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived *us*, and by it slew *Jesus*”²⁷ in the ultimate “death” that Paul “found” “the commandment” to be “unto.”²⁸ The only sense in which in Jesus' full identity with sin we could say “sin ... deceived” Him, was in our sin cutting Him off from His Father,

making Him feel forsaken, unable to sense His Father's presence, though He was there. Though He endured by faith and love to the end (continuing to address His Father), He died from the weight of such separation.²⁹ The commandment that binds sin to death shows the necessity of the cross, because sin's full result could only be seen, manifested, and thus atoned for in such a venue that enabled sinners to be saved.³⁰

12 Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

This for sure was Jesus' testimony as well as Paul's. He repeatedly affirmed the importance of law and commandment.³¹

13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

In affirming the opposite of what Paul here denied (that the commandment brings death), and thereby agreeing with him, Jesus once said that the way to “enter into life” was to “keep the commandments.”³² However, no one but Jesus could confess in the ultimate sense that sin (not the commandment) works death “in me.” Only “in Him” do we see the commandment showing how “exceeding sinful” sin really is, “working death in” Him as He entered into full identity with the sinner. Because it was shown in Him, no other sinner has yet to experience that full abandonment of God. Paul could discern the death sin was working in him as a sinner only by the light shining from the cross. In revealing the horror of sin, its “exceeding sinful[ness],” Jesus at Calvary actually succeeded to “magnify the law, and make it honourable” (Isa 42:21).

14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

By means of “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:2), Jesus in a way no other human has ever done, fulfilled “the righteousness of the law” (Rom 8:4). Jesus was as

spiritual as the law was spiritual; thus He fulfilled it.³³

While the nature Jesus took was identified with our flesh,³⁴ while He was “made under the law,”³⁵ and while the humanity He took would be described as “carnal” before He took it, in taking it He united it with divinity,³⁶ redeeming it from its “sold” condition in one sense,³⁷ and in another sense condemning it in Himself and taking it to its rightful reward. Because of His identity and mission, His humanity in contrast to ours was “free under righteousness.”

The only sense in which we could say His “self” was “sold under sin” was the entirety of the giving of Himself to address the sin problem. In selling Himself “under sin” in this sense, He defeated sin and redeemed all who were bound there.³⁸

- 1 This paper is a condensation of a larger paper by the same title presented at the Gospel Study Group, March 2009 (see http://www.gospel-studygroup.org/?page_id=74). This version does not address Paul's own experience at length, as does the full version. The KJV Bible is used unless otherwise noted (with its original italicized supplied words). Phrases in quotes without footnotes are from the immediate verses in Romans 7, or a just-referenced passage.
- 2 Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Release*, vol. 13 (Silver Spring, Md.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1981, 1987, 1990, 1993), 19.
- 3 Heb 10:7 “I come ... to do thy will, O God”; from Ps 40:7, 8
- 4 John 5:30; Luke 22:42
- 5 Heb 2:18
- 6 The observation that the husband is the flesh comes from Paul's statement that the husband's death is what is necessary to free the woman from the law that binds her to him. Four times he wrote of this transaction, “loosed from the law,” “is free from that law,” “are become dead to the law,” “are delivered from the law” (verses 2-4, 6). The verbs used show a part of us becomes inoperative (particularly *katargeo*, used in 2 and 6). What dies is that in (*en*) which we were held, specifically “the flesh” (verses 5, 6). Paul elsewhere wrote of the necessary death of the flesh (Gal 5:24), a death which is to flow out of the death of Jesus (Rom 6:6; 7:4), and involves the death of self (7:4; 8:13; Gal 2:20). To show that this flesh is what Jesus put to death is one of the goals of this paper.
- 7 James 1:13
- 8 Luke 9:23, 24
- 9 Rom 8:3
- 10 See Rom 6:2,7,11
- 11 Paul will make this connection in Rom 8:2-4
- 12 Luke 1:35

- 13 Paul will state this in 8:3. That sin exists as a singular state of our nature, behind all the plural sins that are inner and outer actions, is seen by Paul's uses in this section of Romans of singular *hamartia*—how *sin* works out sins (verse 8); the commandment revives *sin* (verse 9); *sin* dwells in me and does the evil sins (verses 17, 19, 20); *sin* can be identified by “the law of sin which is in my members” (verse 23); Jesus in His incarnation dealt with this root of “*sin* in the flesh” (8:3). The core issue of law is faith and love (the core of God's character, righteousness; 1 Thess 5:8; Eph 6:14; Matt 22:37-40; Rom 3:31; 1 Tim 1:5; 1 John 5:2, 3), thus the *sin* that is manifested in sins (detailed by law and commandment; verse 7; 1 John 3:4, 5) is the absence of faith and love (Rom 13:8, 10; 14:23; Gal 5:14; James 2:8).
- 14 Compare Rom 8:2, 11; Eph 1:19, 20
- 15 Luke 1:35. The noun “Spirit” (*pneuma*) is neuter, thus the adjective “holy” (*hagion*) that modifies it is also neuter. It seems that this is the reason the same neuter adjective is used as a noun for the “son” she is to “bring forth” (Luke 1:31), rather than the masculine form of the adjective which would agree with the gender of “son.” Even in His humanity He was “that holy thing” at birth because His humanity was joined with His divinity by means of “the Holy Spirit.”
- 16 John 6:63; compare Heb 2:14, 18
- 17 *Pathema* is used both to describe how Jesus identified with us (Heb 2:9, 10; 1 Pet 1:11; 5:1), and also our responsive identification (2 Cor 1:5; Phil 3:10; 1 Pet 4:13).
- 18 Rom 7:7; 8:2
- 19 In the reflections on verse 18 and following, we will consider the only sense in which He would find something identified with sin within Himself.
- 20 Luke 22:15
- 21 The word here “concupiscence” is the same word as “lust” in verse 7.
- 22 Heb 9:26; the verb “appeared,” *phaneroo*, is “manifested” in 1 John 3:5 above.
- 23 In this verse Paul uses the Greek first person singular pronoun for emphasis on self. “I was alive ... I died.” These are the first two occurrences of this pronoun in Romans; it will be used eight times in this chapter, from verse 9 here to verse 25.
- 24 John 12:23; the verb, *erchomai*, is the same.
- 25 Compare Deut 30:15,19.
- 26 Compare Matt 26:38.
- 27 Note that the “me” is supplied.
- 28 Jesus used the same death verb as Paul did here, *apokteino*, to describe His impending death (Matt 16:21; 17:23).
- 29 Note the carefully crafted sequence of events in Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1940), 756. In His dying moment, when He is victorious only through faith to the very end, the sense of separation was withdrawn in what appears to be a sign of victory in the giving of His life.
- 30 It is also thus that the cross sets up the final justice of God in eradicating sin at the end, which will necessitate the inclusion of those who identify with sin to the end. Sin is so deadly it must be removed.
- 31 Matt 5:17, 18; 15:3, 6; 19:17; 22:36-40; Luke 10:26-28
- 32 Matt 19:17. Jesus and Paul are in harmony regarding the method of salvation for sinners. No sinner can walk his way out of the paralysis of sin and death. The commandments as a code are

not the way back to obedience and life. Only the spirit of the law, being faith and love, restored supernaturally to the heart devoid of them by sin, brings the sinner back to life. That process begins with God's creative faith and love expressed (the ground of salvation), and continues with a responsive faith and love, as this law is rewritten in the heart.

- 33 Matt 5:17
- 34 John 1:14
- 35 Gal 4:4; this verse using the same preposition, *hupo*, as in verse 14 here “under sin,” clearly says Jesus was “made” (*ginomai*) on the wrong side of the law, “under the law,” on the sin side.
- 36 Jesus included Himself in the witness to the necessity of being “born of the Spirit” as he talked with Nicodemus, using again the same verb as here. “We speak that we do know (*eido*), and testify that we have seen” (John 3:11). We should see in the first person plural of this verse, a passing reference to the fact that the Godhead had been living from eternity in self-sacrificing other-centeredness. They above all others “know” and “have seen” this dynamic, of which They each “testify” (not of self, but of the Others; John 5:32, 37; 15:26; 18:37; 1 John 5:9, 10). Jesus is speaking of heavenly things to Nicodemus (verses 12, 13).
- 37 His mortality was manifest in the divine instructions to Joseph to flee to Egypt when Jesus was a baby. His life was in danger. Repeatedly during His life He was miraculously preserved in His mortality until His hour was come. All of these are further evidences of His identification with sin and sinners, being vulnerable to death, in spite of His not sinning.
- 38 The verb here translated “sold” is *piprasko*, Paul's only use of it. We should consider this an echo of Jesus' use in Matt. 13:46, “sold all that he had.” Ellen White in *Christ's Object Lesson* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1941), 118 shows how this action describes the laying down of all the riches of the universe in the giving of Himself to buy the pearl of great price, fallen humanity. She powerfully describes the faith of God at work in this word picture. Can we not see He “sold” Himself “under sin” to redeem us from that very position?

Fred Bischoff, M.D., is a preventive medicine physician on the faculty of Loma Linda University. He has been studying the relation of Adventist history to Bible prophecy since the late 1980s and has been spending most of his time the last four years working to update a CD-ROM collection of early Adventist writings, in partnership with the Ellen G. White Estate. His Bible study groups are currently studying Daniel and Revelation. He enjoys exploring and explaining “the simplicity that is in Christ” in relation to history and prophecy, including 1888 and the Adventist mission. One of his favorite topics is the faith of Jesus.



“Help Thou Mine Unbelief.”

Have you ever come to a place in your life where you sort of wondered how you might have gotten there? To be perfectly honest, I have many times, and I would like to tell you about one of those times. I lived in Quincy, Massachusetts, in the late 80's. One breezy day as I was walking along an earthen bank that passed in back of the apartment building where my roommate and I lived, I impulsively threw my arms around the trunk of a big strong Maple and asked nobody in particular, “What am I *doing* here?” I was, of course, not expecting an answer at that moment, but I did get one a year or so later. I was about 28 at the time and had always thought that someday I would marry and have kids. But there wasn't a prospect in sight!

Then one day, my friend Chris told me about a guy she knew who had been observing me at a distance. When she described him to me, I instantly recalled the times I had seen him: once at a church social where we were formally introduced and shook hands, once at Sunday brunch at Country Life Vegetarian Restaurant in Boston where he did a quick sketch of me on a napkin (and in the process pointed out the dimple I have on my chin), and once at my sister Jennifer Jill's Christian folk music concert in Boston. After all that, I was still unaware of his attraction to me until Chris told me about it. She said he was planning to get a group of unmarried people together to take a little Sunday cruise out to George's Island in the Boston Harbor and that if I were “interested,” I should go.

To make a long story short, I showed up for the cruise, and we are now on 21 years of marriage.

Isn't it interesting that not long after I had wrapped my arms around that big tree, in sort of an act of surrender, along came

one of the greatest blessings of my life? I don't know about you, but where I come from, being in a position of need is not looked upon favorably. Helping others is great, but asking for help is not so good. If you need something, you must work for it.

Take the rich young ruler, for example (see Matthew 19: 16-24). He wanted eternal life, but he wanted to do something good in exchange for it. Contrast this with the man whose son had “a dumb spirit” that caused the boy to foam at the mouth and become rigid (see Mark 9:17-27).

Is this not how we sometimes approach God? Don't we sometimes emphasize the doing over the being and short-change God of the fellowship that He so longs to share with us? He isn't an army sergeant. He has feelings.

The former evidently thought he had something worthy to give in exchange for eternal life; whereas the latter, who was desperately seeking healing for his diseased son, had nothing to give but a diseased son. And we all know what happened. The rich young ruler went away sorrowful, and the seizure-afflicted young man was healed.

The rich young ruler treated God like most people treat the cashier at Wal-Mart. They are polite, but they are not interested in enjoying the cashier's company. They just want to get their stuff and go.

Is this not how we sometimes

approach God? Don't we sometimes emphasize the doing over the being and short-change God of the fellowship that He so longs to share with us? He isn't an army sergeant. He has feelings. Perhaps it makes Him sick that we only seek to get our “marching orders,” when He would like nothing better than for us just to be His friend and have fellowship with Him. Then let's surrender and allow Him to “anoint our eyes with eye salve” (Revelation 3:18) so that we can see things from His perspective and to “take away” our “filthy garments” and give us a “change of raiment” (Zechariah 3:4), because our own “righteousness is as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6).

So, the next time you wrap your arms around a tree wondering, “What am I doing here?” remember the One who wrapped His arms around you. He knows how you got there, and He knows how to get you out of there. “He that spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32). He longs for your presence in His life. So, stay with Him.

Kristin McGuire writes from Topsham, Maine. She lives there with her husband, Norman, and their four children, Tim, Becky, Shawn, and Gavin. Before becoming active in the local church in music ministry and Sabbath School work, she served in full-time restaurant evangelism for four years and Bible work for three years after that. In 1984 she both graduated from Purdue University with a BS in General Management/Marketing and was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She enjoys tennis, as well as cooking, walking, reading, and writing.

Meetings at South Lancaster, Mass.

by Ellen G. White



This article first appeared in the Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, March 5, 1889. We thought it beneficial to study this account in light of the call for revival among us today. —Editors

Special meetings began at South Lancaster on Friday, Jan. 11. We were glad

to find the church well filled with those who had come to receive benefit from the meetings. There were many persons present whom we had never met before, and their presence testified to the power of God to convert souls, and to turn men's feet into the path of his commandments. Delegates were present from Maine, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and other States. We realized that there was a work to be done in setting things in order, which man's best efforts could not accomplish without the aid of God. Our hearts were drawn out in earnest supplication to God that he would work in our behalf. We had a message of present truth for the people; and if they would place themselves in the channel of light, they would be prepared to do a work for others similar to the work that should be done for them.

On Sabbath afternoon I had freedom in presenting to the people the necessity of obeying the law of God. It is not enough to say that we believe. We must have that genuine faith which works by love, and purifies the soul. God has given us a perfect standard of righteousness in his law. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." This comprehends the whole duty of man to his God and to his neighbor. We owe to God our life, and all that makes life desirable, and when we refuse to render obedience to him, we rob and defraud our own souls. No man can choose his own way without deep ingratitude to God; in so doing he renders to God enmity for love.

We felt burdened for those who had been bearing the message of truth to others, lest they should close their hearts to some of the precious rays of heaven's light that God has sent them. Jesus rejoiced when his

followers received his messages of truth. At one time he raised his eyes to heaven, and said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." The precious Saviour, who brought life and immortality to light, rejoiced that the plan of salvation could be understood by those who were humble in spirit, although the proud and self-sufficient could not comprehend its mystery. The worldly-wise cannot see the beauty of that truth which Christ constantly opens to the understanding of those who have a willing, childlike desire to be loyal to God. To the humble the truth is the power of God unto salvation.

On Sabbath afternoon, many hearts were touched, and many souls were fed on the bread that cometh down from heaven. After the discourse we enjoyed a precious social meeting. The Lord came very near, and convicted souls of their great need of his grace and love. We felt the necessity of presenting Christ as a Saviour who was not afar off, but nigh at hand. When the Spirit of God begins to work upon the hearts of men, the fruit is seen in confession of sin, and restitution for wrongs. All through the meetings, as the people sought to draw nearer to God, they brought forth works meet for repentance by confessing one to another where they had wronged each other by word or act. Wild, clamorous cries and exercises are no evidence that the Spirit of God is at work. The Lord manifested himself to Elijah in the still small voice. Says Christ, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." It is the sinner himself who has barred the door. Will he take down the barriers? Will he unbolt the door? The locks are all on his side of the door, not on the Saviour's side.

There were many, even among the ministers, who saw the truth as it is in Jesus in a light in which they had never before viewed

it. They saw the Saviour as a sin-pardoning Saviour, and the truth as the sanctifier of the soul. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." If we would be partakers with Christ of his glory, we must also be willing to share with him in his humiliation. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." This must be the experience of every true child of God. "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin."

We should not murmur if we are called upon to share the suffering part of religion. There are many who do not feel averse to suffering, but they do not exercise simple, living faith. They say they do not know what it means to take God at his word. They have a religion of outward forms and observances. It is painful to see the unbelief that exists in the hearts of many of God's professed followers. We have the most precious truths ever committed to mortals, and the faith of those who have received these truths should correspond to their greatness and value. There are many who seem to feel that they have a great work to do themselves before they can come to Christ for his salvation. They seem to think that Jesus will come in at the very last of their struggle, and give them help by putting the finishing touch to their life-work. It seems difficult for them to understand that Christ is a complete Saviour, and able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. They lose sight of the fact that Christ himself is "the way, the truth, and the life." When we individually rest upon Christ, with full assurance of faith, trusting alone to the efficacy of his blood to cleanse from all sin, we shall have peace in believing that what God has promised he is able to perform. As Christ represented the Father, so we are to represent Christ to the world. We cannot transfer our obligation to others. God desires to

make known to you what is the richness of his glory, that you may preach the mystery of salvation to those around you,—Christ in you the hope of glory.

As our brethren and sisters opened their hearts to the light, they obtained a better knowledge of what constitutes faith. The Lord was very precious; he was ready to strengthen his people. The meetings continued a week beyond their first appointment. The school was dismissed, and all made earnest work of seeking the Lord. Eld. Jones came from Boston, and labored most earnestly for the people, speaking twice and sometimes three times a day. The flock of God were fed with soul-nourishing food. The very message the Lord has sent to the people of this time was presented in the discourses. Meetings were in progress from early morning till night, and the results were highly satisfactory.

In the early morning meetings I tried to present the paternal love and care of God for his children. The knowledge of God's love is the most effectual knowledge to obtain, that the character may be ennobled, refined, and elevated. Jesus is to be our pattern. The Lord has lessons of the greatest importance for us to learn. He leads us as children to take views of his goodness, mercy, and love, from the simple, lowly life of our dear Redeemer. Christ ever directed the minds of his disciples to God as to a loving Father. He educated his followers to look upon God with confidence and love. When we are overawed with the greatness and justice of God, we are pointed to Jesus, to his spotless character and his infinite love. There we see the Father revealed in the Son, for God is love.

Both students and teachers have shared largely in the blessing of God. The deep movings of the Spirit of God have been felt upon almost every heart. The general testimony was borne by those who attended the meeting that they had obtained an experience beyond anything they had known before. They testified their joy that Christ had forgiven their sins. Their hearts were filled with thanksgiving and praise to God. Sweet peace was in their souls. They loved every one, and felt that they could rest in the love of God.

I have never seen a revival work go forward with such thoroughness, and yet

remain so free from all undue excitement. There was no urging or inviting. The people were not called forward, but there was a solemn realization that Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. The honest in heart were ready to confess their sins, and to bring forth fruit to God by repentance and restoration, as far as it lay in their power. We seemed to breathe in the very atmosphere of heaven. Angels were indeed hovering around. Friday evening the social service began at five, and it was not closed until nine. No time was lost; for every one had a living testimony to bear. The meeting would have continued hours longer, if it had been allowed to run its full course; but it was thought best to close it at that time. I was not able to sleep that night until nearly day. The Lord had visited his people. And there was joy in heaven among the angels over the repentant sinners that had come back to the Father. What a beautiful sight it was to the universe to see that as fallen men and women beheld Christ, they were changed, taking the impression of his image upon their souls.

There were many who testified that as the searching truths had been presented, they had been convicted in the light of the law as transgressors. They had been trusting in their own righteousness. Now they saw it as filthy rags, in comparison with the righteousness of Christ, which is alone acceptable to God. While they had not been open transgressors, they saw themselves depraved and degraded in heart. They had substituted other gods in the place of their Heavenly Father. They had struggled to refrain from sin, but had trusted in their own strength. We should go to Jesus just as we are, confess our sins, and cast our helpless souls upon our compassionate Redeemer. This subdues the pride of the heart, and is a crucifixion of self. In the parable, the father saw the returning prodigal son. He saw his repentance and contrition of soul, and he had compassion on him, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him. The son spoke his penitence, saying, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither

the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." The prodigal made a full confession of his sin. He made no excuse for his wrong-doing, and he was forgiven, and re-established in his father's house.

We thank the Lord, we rejoice, that it is not too late for wanderers to return, with humble confession, and receive a welcome in the Father's house,—to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ. I thank God for this with a full heart every day. We should be the most ungrateful of his creatures, were we indifferent when he works for the children of men in such a marvelous way. We should be like the heath in the desert, if we did not praise God when good cometh. I know that there has been rejoicing in heaven because of the good work done in South Lancaster; and if the angels rejoice, why should not we who have also witnessed the return of wanderers from darkness into the marvelous light of God's love?

To know God is the most wonderful knowledge that men can have. There is much wisdom with worldly men; but with all their wisdom, they behold not the beauty and majesty, the justice and wisdom, the goodness and holiness, of the Creator of all worlds. The Lord walks among men by his providences; but his stately steppings are not heard, his presence is not discerned, his hand is not recognized. The work of Christ's disciples is to shine as lights, making manifest to the world the character of God. They are to catch the increasing rays of light from the word of God, and reflect them to men enshrouded in the darkness of misapprehension of God. The servants of Christ must rightly represent the character of God and Christ to men. Says the apostle, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

Ellen G. White was a prophet in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Her ministry spanned over 70 years in the 19th and early 20th centuries. She is the most widely translated female author in the history of literature.

Breaking the Paradigm

by Arnet Mathers



The disciples lived in a world where power, authority, control, honor, and

wealth were the measure of one's fortune. At the moment we pick up this story, nine of the disciples were dissatisfied with their fortune. Everything they did was influenced at some level by their desire for power and authority in the Messiah's kingdom when He would take the throne and throw off the oppressive yoke of the Romans.

Their hopes had been threatened. Jesus had said something about dying and about taking up one's cross to follow Him (Luke 9:21-26), but they didn't know how to reconcile that with their expectations. Hadn't He also just confirmed them in their belief that He was the Messiah (Luke 9:18-21), and, after the feeding of the five-thousand (Luke 9:12-17), wasn't popular sentiment ripe to establish His kingdom (Luke 9:18-19; John 6:14-15)?

Then, Peter, James, and John had been invited to spend the night with Jesus up on the mountain, since then known as the Mount of Transfiguration, and the nine left behind were jealous. They had spent the night nursing their wounds and commiserating with their doubts and fears, instead of strengthening their faith by dwelling upon Christ's words and prayer.¹

The next morning, failure simply added to their consternation. A man had brought his son who was suffering from demonic oppression. At times the demon would cast his son into the fire; at other times, into the water, to destroy him. Jesus had already given the twelve disciples "power and authority over all demons" and sent them out to preach and heal (Luke 9:1-2, 6), but this morning they were stymied.

When Jesus returned from His night up on the mountain, all was in confusion. The disciples were surrounded by a great crowd, and the scribes were taking advantage of their failure to cast out the

demon and heal the boy to bring shame and dishonor upon them and their Master (Mark 9:14-18).²

Jesus comprehends the disciples' failure and the caviling crowd, "'O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and bear with you?' ... Then Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the child, and gave him back to his father. And they were all amazed at the majesty of God" (Luke 9:41-43).

We see what we expect to see. If we don't expect to see it, then we don't see it, and to us it doesn't even seem to exist.

Attempting a Paradigm Shift

While the crowd was busy marveling over all the things which Jesus did, "He said to His disciples, 'Let these words sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men.'" Luke 9:43-44). Jesus' words directly contradict their paradigm.

We all have a paradigm—a fundamental belief structure that helps us organize and make sense of the information we receive. If the data fit into our paradigm, then it makes sense; we understand it and use it to reinforce our paradigm. If the data do not fit into our paradigm, then it is like noise to us, and we filter it out—we are unable to see it or hear it, let alone make sense of it.

The disciples' paradigm included power, honor, glory, and an earthly kingdom ruled over by the Messiah who would throw off the yoke of Roman bondage. When Jesus said He was "about to be betrayed into the hands of men," that was not part of the plan. It did not fit the paradigm. So, "they did not understand this saying, and it was hidden from them so that they did not perceive it; and they were afraid to

ask Him about this saying" (Luke 9:45).

They were unable to understand. They simply could not comprehend His words. His assault on their paradigm (honor, glory, power) was incomprehensible, because nothing He said resonated with what they were sure must be the truth—their paradigm. Not only that, but their paradigm was so precious to them that they were unwilling to risk its well-being and longevity. "They were afraid to ask Him about saying." They didn't even want to know what He might mean. In spite of Jesus' efforts to reveal the underlying cause of their failure to heal the boy, they clung to the paradigm that enfeebled them.

They were so far from comprehending what Jesus told them, the next thing we read is about their bickering over who would be greatest in the Messiah's earthly kingdom (Luke 9:46). It was as if Jesus had never told them that instead of receiving power, honor, and glory, He was "about to be betrayed into the hands of men," and die.

Again, Jesus seeks to break their paradigm. In a world where the mighty lord it over the weak, Jesus introduces the honor of meekness: "And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him, and said to them, 'Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great'" (Luke 9:47-48). What a novel concept! In God's kingdom those who strive for honor, power, and glory will have none; but those who are content to serve in humility and self-sacrificing love will be the greatest (compare Philippians 2:1-11).

John began to question his actions toward someone he and James had seen casting out demons in Jesus' name. They had thought it was Jesus' honor they were defending, when they forbade him, because he was not part of their group (Luke 9:49), but began to realize it was their own power, honor, and glory for which they were concerned.³ "Jesus said to him, 'Do not forbid

him, for he who is not against us is on our side' ” (Luke 9:50).

We, too, have the freedom to recognize and appreciate the true signet of the Spirit's presence—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23)—no matter what labels the bearer wears. God's true church is yet scattered throughout the confusion of Babylon, waiting to be gathered into one fold with the One Shepherd (Revelation 18:4; John 10:16).

The light of the dawning sun, first hints at a lessening of the darkness and gradually grows brighter and brighter as the sun ascends to its zenith. So the lessons by which Jesus sought to destroy the disciples' paradigm of power, honor, and glory, took long to sink in (compare Proverbs 4:18).

Jesus “set His face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51). There had long been prejudice between Jews and Samaritans, ever since the Jews refused help from the Samaritans in the rebuilding of the Temple, lest the Jewish worship be contaminated by their syncretistic religion.⁴ In Jesus' day, it was so bitter that the Jews hardly had any civil dealings with the Samaritans. But now Jesus and His disciples are headed to Jerusalem, and their journey lies through Samaria.

Jesus sent a couple of the disciples ahead to procure lodgings for the night, and they were rebuffed by the prejudice of the Samaritans. The disciples could not believe their Master would be insulted that way. Oh, and anything that touched their Master's honor, touched theirs as well. This slight could not, according to their paradigm, go unanswered without taint upon themselves. So, James and John did the only “sensible” thing: they asked Jesus, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?” (Luke 9:54).

Jesus told them plainly they were operating from the wrong paradigm, “ ‘You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them.’ And they went to another village” (Luke 9:55-56). It is so often tempting to just get rid of those people who don't give us the respect due us, or who oppose us at every turn. Jesus, however, affirms, “The Son of Man did

not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45).

Time and again Jesus tried to instill in His disciples a different paradigm, one that would prepare them to be content with privation, one that would allow no earthly consideration to turn them from following Him in self-denial and humble service (see Luke 9:57-52). But even the night of His arrest, they were still operating from the paradigm of honor, power, and glory. In one last attempt to jar their paradigm before He was taken from them, He washed their feet. Then He directly confronted their expectations of honor, power, and glory: “Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (John 13:12-17).

When we see how hard it is to change the paradigm by which each of us interprets our world, our life experiences, every piece of information we take in, it is amazing that anyone ever truly learns. We see what we expect to see. If we don't expect to see it, then we don't see it, and to us it doesn't even seem to exist.

The Paradigm Finally Broken

If the disciples had “watched and waited” with Jesus, that they “enter not into temptation” (Matthew 26:41), the light would have penetrated the darkness, the paradigm would have been shattered and replaced with one more in harmony with the principles of Messiah's kingdom.⁵

We can watch and pray, by humbling ourselves before God's word, willingly submitting to its correction and reproof (2 Timothy 3:16-17). “Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23-24).

One way or another, however, the old paradigm must die before a new one can

take hold. When Jesus died on the cross, all the hopes and expectations of the disciples died with Him. Cleopas expressed their shattered dreams, “We were hoping [but are hoping no longer], that it was He who was going to redeem Israel [but He has not redeemed Israel]” (Luke 24:21). With the old paradigm so thoroughly shattered, they were at a loss what to think. It almost blew them away. They were barely hanging on to existence.

But Jesus did not forsake them. He drew near to them in their bewilderment, and revealed to them the paradigm that had been there all along in the Scriptures (Luke 24:25-27). When the light dawns, and we understand the misconceptions that have caused our pain, our wounds are healed, and joy returns (compare Luke 24:52-53).

“Be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:6-7).

Praise God who is able by His Spirit to open our blind eyes, and to lead us into all truth (John 16:12-13).

1 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1940), 431.

2 Ibid., 427.

3 Ibid., 437-438.

4 Ibid., 188; Idem., *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1943), 568.

5 Idem., *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5 (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1948), 409.

Arnet Mathers, and his wife, Lorraine, live in downeast Maine. He pastors the Calais and Whiting Seventh-day Adventist Churches. From an early age Arnet has had a sense that the part of truth that makes it “moral” is on an inner spiritual and relational plane. That has been his guiding light as he looks more deeply into the teachings of Scripture. Jesus must be all and in all. He worked in publishing ministries before entering pastoral ministry. Since entering pastoral ministry in 1994, he has served congregations in southern Illinois, southwestern Vermont, and downeast Maine.



“Live Out Thy Life Within Me”

by Shawn Brace

I'd like to share a testimony on “practical”

Christian living. I'm sure I'm not the only person who has struggled to feel sympathy for someone who seems to be a serial complainer, or whose will has ever been crossed, or any number of irritants and temptations that bombard us endlessly. The other day, as I was driving to Prayer Meeting, I was giving myself a “lecture” about how I needed to do better in these areas.

This was certainly not the first time I had ever given myself such a lecture. The conviction about my failures is one that frequently confronts me. And time and time again, when this conviction confronts me, I quickly make up my mind that I am going to improve, I am going to feel more sympathy for those who need sympathy, and I am going to be more patient with my wife, my kids, my church members. I am, after all, a Pastor; I should be a shining example of what a surrendered Christian looks like. Furthermore, I see in Scripture the reality that God wants His people to become like Christ. Christlikeness is the goal.

The problem is these lectures never work! No matter how many times I have convinced myself that I need to do better, that I need to be more loving, kind, and true, the execution of the conviction—though it may last for a season—never truly sticks.

This is because I am a sinful human being who has a sinful, stony heart. And my sinful flesh cannot produce sinless results; it cannot be converted; it needs to be killed.

Paul certainly recognized this problem when he wrote to the Galatians. In his epistle to them he pointedly wonders, “Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?” (Galatians 3:3, NKJV). Or, as the New Living Translation renders it, “How

foolish can you be? After starting your Christian lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?”

J.W. Lehman poignantly echoes this, “After we are justified and converted,” he writes, “then we often assume that we are now able of ourselves to do those things the law requires of us. . . . We assume that conversion is some kind of an empowering or enabling act that puts us in the position where now we can perform, where before we could not perform.”¹ I have been realizing lately that I have subtly bought into the mentality Lehman exposes. I thought that the purpose of the law was to help us know what we are supposed to try to do, and when I see something in my life that is out of harmony with what God wants, then I am to correct it.

It has been as though scales have fallen from my eyes recently, however. As Paul shows in the latter half of Galatians 3, the primary purpose of the law is to show us that we are transgressors and that we are *not* keeping it. It's not a prescription of what we are to try to do. Ellen White affirms this: “Because of [Adam's] sin our natures are fallen and we cannot make ourselves righteous. Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law.”² Thus, once we have recognized where we are in relation to the law and acknowledge the impossibility of us, when we are walking in our flesh, to keep it, we are ready to fall upon the mercy of God and have Christ's righteousness placed upon us. He then gives us a new heart and, moment by moment as we surrender to Christ, we learn to “walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16).

The way this played out that day as I was driving is that I realized it was impossible for my sinful heart to produce sympathy for anyone. No amount of trying harder can bring out sympathy from a heart that naturally does not feel sympathy. So

instead of trying harder, God simply invited me—and continues to invite me—to “behold” Jesus, to look at my Savior whose heart bleeds with compassion. And as I behold Him, I will be “transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

This gives me great confidence because I recognize these struggles are not my “battles” to fight. I simply say with Paul, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7:24, 25). Power, strength, and victory are in Jesus. They are not in my sinful human flesh; my man-powered efforts.

Indeed, as Ellen White affirms, though we are sinful and wretched, Christ's character stands in place of our character and we are accounted righteous. But then she beautifully adds this powerful thought: “More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure.”³

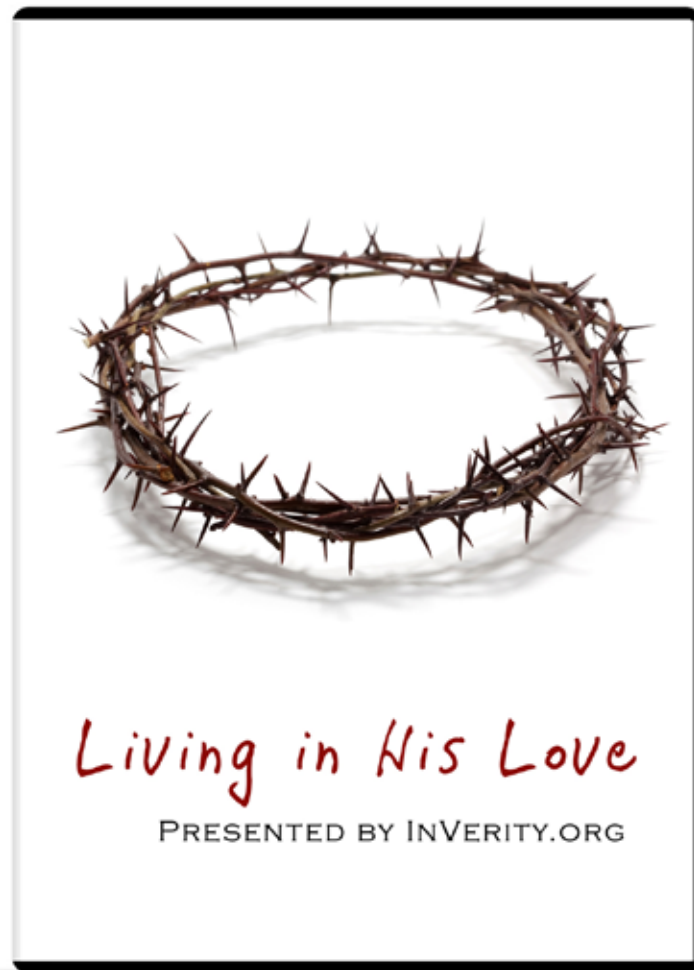
O, glorious promise!

1 J.W. “Bill” Lehman, *Christ our Righteousness* (no publisher given, 2003), 197.

2 Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1956), 62.

3 Ibid., 62, 63.

Shawn Brace pastors the Bangor and Dexter churches in Maine. He and his wife, Camille, have a beautiful son, Camden, and they just welcomed their daughter, Acadia, into the world on February 9. When Shawn isn't busy pastoring, he loves spending time outdoors—especially photographing the beauty of New England.



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